



October 8, 2009

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Gregoire,

I am writing to express grave concerns regarding the direction of a study commissioned by the Legislature to evaluate options for closing Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration facilities. Recent public comments and discussions with staff in the Office Financial Management indicate that the scope of this study may have been unnecessarily limited and results predetermined. If so, the pending recommendations will not provide the best, most cost-effective alternatives for housing and treating juvenile offenders in our state. This is an unacceptable outcome to a very critical decision that affects both the treatment of juveniles and the safety of our communities.

This process has been fraught with political undercurrents from the state. Earlier studies suggested that the JRA facility in Naselle is the most logical to be closed in the event downsizing is necessary. Yet strangely, majority lawmakers specifically attempted to eliminate that option by turning the focus of this study on other facilities. The legislation specifically calls out Green Hill and Maple Lane for review. But there cannot be a credible recommendation derived from a study that does not evaluate the entire JRA system.

The primary contractor for this study even raised a concern about the limited scope of the work as outlined in the state's request for proposal. Under item 1 in the Project Approach and Methodology, the Christopher Murray & Associates submission states "While some institutions to be studied are specified in the RFP, many possible alternatives are not. The CMA team will conduct a work session with OFM and appropriate stakeholders to develop a shortlist of potentially feasible alternatives."

This would seem a more responsible approach to a thorough study, and yet by all accounts it doesn't seem to be happening. In fact there appears to be very deliberate efforts to steer clear of some viable alternatives by limiting the scope of this study. How is it that the alternative deemed most practical by an early study – closing Naselle – is now off the table? What has changed other than the politics of this decision?



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My suspicions are further provoked by public comments made by Mr. Dan Robertson, assistant deputy secretary of JRA, in which he presupposes the outcome of this study, suggesting that the report will recommend closing either Green Hill or Maple Lane. This statement was made before receiving a single report back from the contractor that is conducting the study. As you might imagine, this does not instill confidence in the outcome of this already political exercise.

The manipulation of this process, through both the enacting legislation and execution of this study, will most certainly lead to predetermined results, not the best decisions to meet the needs of juvenile offenders and ensure public safety. I would request that you follow the recommendations of the contractor to include all potential alternatives in the scope of this study.

While I understand that you and majority party in the Legislature have banked on savings from bed closures to balance the budget deficit, public safety and treatment of juveniles are not a responsibilities to be compromised. We owe the taxpayers and citizens our very best effort to do the job in the most cost effective way, but first and foremost, to do it right.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rico DeBolt", with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

RICHARD DeBOLT
Republican Leader
20th Legislative District

cc: Sen. Stevens
Sen. Hargrove
Rep. Hurst
Rep. Pearson
Rep. Alexander
Rep. Linville